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VENEZUELA CUT DOWN BANANA TREES AND STOPPED YELLOW FEVER FROM ITS SCOURGE OF COUNTRY

Bitter Opposition Ceased When People Found that Sanitation Work Was Getting Results—Doctor Nearly Mobbed During Height of the Excitement

Honolulu is not the only community where the banana trees were cut down in the fight against the terrible yellow fever. In Venezuela almost precisely the same measures of safety were taken, and in Venezuela there was an outcry against the free-cutting just as there was in Honolulu. But the tree-cutting was continued, and the yellow fever mosquito has been practically wiped out.

This interesting and timely information is contained in a lengthy article from the New York Evening Post, which tells of the Venezuela campaign as follows:

History often repeats itself, but if ever it steps beyond that well-trodden path and copies fiction, it does so during the frequent carnival days in Caracas. On these occasions that beautiful mountain city of the tropics is put in gala dress and its citizens give themselves up to merry-making. In the Plaza at night myriads of varicolored lanterns glimmer in the tropical trees, casting fairy lights on the throng of masqueraders, and when the band strikes up the gay Spanish airs the weird revellers dance madly in the open spaces. Happily heedless are practically all that in their midst, as in Poe's fantastic tale, stalks "The Masque of the Red Death."

But this sinister masque is very keenly noted by at least one man in the roistering crowd—a dark, serious man, not yet of middle age, in whose black eyes the calm light of the student is shot through with the fire of the born fighter in the presence of an enemy. This man is Dr. Samuel Dario Maldonado, director of the newly established "Office of National Health," who is striving to overcome the fanatical prejudices of his people against scientific sanitation. For the common enemies of health are not the only foes this modern scientist has to fight; as in other great reforms, ignorance, superstition, tradition, and unwillingness to alter the settled order of things loom large in his path. By virtue of nature's prodigality Caracas should be one of the most healthful of tropical cities. Elevated 3,000 feet above the nearby sea, with a delightful climate, the temperature averaging 77 degrees Fahrenheit, and with seasonal rains and an abundance of sunshine, there is no good reason why the town should harbor yellow fever and other tropical scourges. These deadly things have been driven from New Orleans, Havana, Panama, and other cities lying at sea level,

where the natural obstacles to be overcome are much greater. A Much Anxious City.

So said Maldonado. Until then the ignorance or thoughtlessness and carelessness of Venezuelans caused them to accept the yellow fever as a matter of course—one of the inalienable evils of life, a disagreeable subject, on which the mind should not dwell. And the task of persuading natural romanticists to go in for realism is not precisely a simple one. When Maldonado rudely aroused the citizens from their apathy by proclaiming that the fever must go, he found himself looked upon as a bothersome person, both serene and harmless. And when, contrary to all Caracas precedent, his words were immediately followed by deeds—deeds which brought every householder in the city face to face with the insanitary conditions, which he was told to remedy within a certain brief time—the Director of Health had indeed become a public nuisance.

The specified time limit having passed, and scarcely 1 per cent. of the householders having given any heed to the new regulations, the Doctor promptly levied fines right and left, undaunted by the resultant howl of indignation. Maldonado had accomplished part of his object. The people at last were awake. What mattered it if he found himself—with the dependent and despised Castro sulking in his tent at Bogota—the most hated man in the South American republic? It would have mattered much to an ordinary man, and it doubtless seriously interfered, and still interferes, with the doctor's personal comfort and with his plans for carrying out quick reform; but these things are mere incidents in the end, for, as with other strong men, obstacles only increase his determination to win out. Maldonado is a fighter, and a rare thing in Spanish America, or anywhere else—he is no respecter of persons. He is fearless, too, and when the fight against him reached a crisis earlier in the year, he risked his very life in the cause of modern sanitation. A former incident of his career aptly illustrates the quality of his grit.

Jailed by President Castro. Castro was in office. It was inevitable that a man of Maldonado's courage and independence should incur the displeasure of the president-potentate. Maldonado was thrown into jail. He did not stay there long. Overpowering his keeper one night, he

used a hammock to lower himself from a window. He had to drop the rest of the way, and was badly hurt. In spite of this, he made his way to the mountains above the city, where he remained in hiding for three months. Then he proceeded cautiously to the coast, where although unfamiliar with such boats, he put to sea in a canoe, and finally reached the little Dutch island of Buen Ayre, just to the east of Curacao; from which point he called Castro that he "awaited his orders."

To understand the situation in Caracas, some specific facts are necessary. Obviously, the constant presence of yellow fever in Venezuela is a matter of grave importance not only to Venezuelans, but to every other country with which it maintains commercial relations. The present fight to stamp out the plague is, therefore, of more than local interest. Most people know nowadays that yellow fever is spread by a small mosquito, black with white markings, known to science as the Stegomyia Calopus. This mosquito is essentially "domestic" in its habits; that is, it likes to live in houses and their immediate vicinity. Therein lies the danger; if the creatures are left unmolested, it is a point in favor of those who wish to exterminate them.

In Venezuela, as in other tropical countries where there is a succession of wet and dry seasons, the houses have cisterns for catching and keeping the waste water. These cisterns, if left uncovered, form ideal breeding places for the yellow-fever mosquito.

Maldonado's first order in his sanitation campaign was to cover up these This, or a similar precautionary measure, had long been a law, but had lain a dead letter on the statute books. So the people did not take the new Director's order seriously. Then fines were laid against rich and poor, literally by the hundreds. The amounts varied from 25 to 400 bolívares (4 to 80 dollars), according to the ability to pay. Even these fines were not regarded seriously at first—far was not every one either "a friend of the President" or "the friend of a friend"? Ah, such a little matter could be "fixed"! But President Gomez, ouster of Castro, soon made it clear that he would not interfere in any way with the man he had appointed Director of the National Health; and so the amazed Caraqueños were forced to dig into their pockets and pay. Also they covered up their cisterns.

Orders Banana Trees Cut. This was the first step. Others were to follow. There are other places

where water collects, and all must be looked to. Among these other places are the large cup-like spaces found in some palm trees, particularly the banana palm, where the branches leave the main trunk. Dr. Maldonado therefore determined to cut down all banana trees in the immediate vicinity of houses—and it was this move, which brought matters to a climax. To show there was no partiality, the banana trees, 300 in number, were at once removed from the President's garden. Even this example did not quiet the people.

Rallying Round the Banana. The Spanish-American is not averse to a fight, and here was a splendid opportunity. The doctor was making enemies right and left. A priest, who attempted to prevent the cutting of the trees around his church, was arrested; a physician, who failed to report a case of yellow fever in his charge, was severely fined; other physicians, who had ignored the old regulations and so felt that their honor was attacked, ranged themselves against the new director. Professional jealousy and petty squabbling played no small part. The story was spread among the people that the banana industry of the whole country was to be destroyed, and not only the few trees within town limits.

To settle the matter once and for all, as he hoped, or at least bring the wild amfess discussion down to a scientific basis, Maldonado called a public conference, at which he promised to go over the whole matter, and invited the doctors and others opposing him to come and listen to his reasons. This memorial event took place a few months ago. Accepting a friendly word, the writer joined the throng that arrived early. Long before the time set the hall was jammed, and crowds, unable to gain access, blocked the streets. "All Caracas" turned out. In the audience were most of the doctors and prominent men of the gay little city. Luckily few women were present.

Promptly on the hour, Dr. Maldonado, in evening dress, appeared on the platform, and was received with apparent cordiality. Other physicians and officials followed. Without formality, the director arranged his papers and began his address. He talked quietly for about an hour, stating his facts calmly and scientifically, though in language which the layman could readily grasp. He repeated what he had already said in pamphlets, circulars and newspaper letters; that he was instituting no novel and untried methods, but was simply adopting those found efficacious in other places—notably Havana and Panama—which had been converted from yellow fever pest holes to healthful residence localities.

His Training at Panama. Maldonado had spent years at Panama and had studied these methods at first hand—methods enforced by

our own Dr. Gorgas with such happy results, and the procedure of the Americans was set by the doctor as a standard. He quoted Dr. Aguirre of Havana, and other experts, to prove that the present regulations were based both on scientific authority and practical experience. Now and then, to emphasize an important point, the speaker's voice grew more intense and he drove home his words with a gesture; but on the whole, there was lacking that tendency to fervid oratory which has given the Spanish-Americans deserved reputation as the greatest natural orators in the world.

A Scene of Upheaval. Scarcely were the words out of the speaker's mouth when the audience was in an uproar. Cries of protest arose from the many friends of the attacked physician. In two seconds a full-sized South American riot was in progress. Men rushed for the stage, while others dashed for the rear of the hall and the balcony. Pistols were promiscuously drawn on both sides, and a sanguinary engagement seemed imminent. The din increased as the crowd worked itself into a frenzy of excitement. The orderly rows of chairs were swept into heaps at the first convulsive movement, or strewn helter skelter over the floor, cracking the shins and impeding the progress of the small minority who were trying to reach an "isle of safety" and take an impartial view of the proceedings.

At the first outbreak, the young wife of Maldonado, a bride of a few weeks, fled to the platform and faced the mob with the one idea of shielding her husband, around whom had quickly gathered a strong body-guard.

Fortunately, the crowd was spending its fury in prolonged noise, and before any serious damage could be done the guards arrived and began to hurry the more turbulent members from the hall to the street. At the same time, above the throng on the platform appeared a man mounted on a table, waving his arms for quiet. This was Roman Cardenas, minister of public works, and one of the supporters of the director of health. Above the din the minister shouted for fair play, and it was not long before he had what was left of the mob under a semblance of control. Gradually, under his words, the bitter feeling subsided, and a burst of applause finally showed that the crisis was passed. Then Dr. Maldonado, pale and disheveled, but his face set with grim determination, concluded his address.

What Has Been Done. On the day following the outbreak the director showed the writer, with the aid of a large map ruled off into sections, just what the conditions were and the progress that had been accomplished. A large reduction had already been made from the twenty-two cases of yellow fever prevalent in the city last December. Several of the suburbs had been entirely cleaned up. An inspection of every house in the city had been made, and there were

to be inspections and reinspections, "until every dwelling, from the luxurious abodes of the rich to the huts of the poor, should be hygienically acceptable." Curiously enough, the well-to-do and more intelligent people seem to be causing more trouble than the others; but none will be exempt. But it is hoped that further extreme measures need not be resorted to. Indeed, later reports from Dr. Maldonado indicate that the situation is constantly improving. The Spanish-Americans are emotional, but they soon cool down, and, as a rule, they have the great virtue of not harboring a grudge. Their better judgment will hardly allow the earnest efforts of their director of health to be unavailing.

ENGLISH EMIGRATION ON THE DECREASE

There was a gain in the population of England and Wales since the census of 1901 of 3,542,649 persons, being the smallest rate of increase since the first enumeration was taken, in 1801. The percentages of increase by decades since 1801 have been: 1811, 14; 1821, 18.06; 1831, 15.80; 1841, 14.27; 1851, 12.65; 1861, 11.90; 1871, 13.31; 1881, 14.36; 1891, 11.65; 1901, 12.17; 1911, 10.89.

A hasty conclusion might be that this falling off in percentage of increase in the decade ending with 1911 was due to the declining birth rate, but analysis shows that it was owing entirely to the excess of emigration over immigration, for the births aggregated 9,290,958 and the deaths 5,245,411. The natural increase of population, which had fallen from 15.09 per cent in 1871-81 to 12.39 in 1901-11, rose during the past decade to 12.43 per cent. The difference is so slight that the natural increase may be considered as practically the same for the past two decades. In the period 1871-81 the excess of emigrants over immigrants amounted to over 164,000 persons, in the next decade to over 600,000, and in the following ten years, 1891-01, it fell to 68,000, but rose to over 500,000 persons in 1901-11.

In the decade 1901-1911 the increase of population in the United States is given as 21 per cent, Germany 15.2, Italy 6.8, Norway 6.8, Switzerland 1.6, Canada 34.1, New Zealand 30.3, Scotland 6.4, Ireland 1.7. In the same ten years the increase, as already shown, in England and Wales was 10.89 per cent, and for the whole United Kingdom 9.1 per cent. During the past ten years there has been a falling off in the rate of increase in the United Kingdom, Norway, Austria and Switzerland; gains were shown in Sweden, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

It's awfully hard to keep the dead past buried.



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